



News Release

For Immediate Release  
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## **NOAA Chooses Indian River Lagoon for Oyster Restoration**

*The Nature Conservancy will direct a project to help restore oyster reefs in Mosquito Lagoon.*

Altamonte springs, fl — Declining oyster reefs in the northernmost region of the Indian River Lagoon will be restored over the next year and a half in a research project coordinated by The Nature Conservancy. Reefs in Mosquito Lagoon located in Canaveral National Seashore will be rebuilt using shells attached to mesh and to provide the structure for oyster larvae to settle on.

Oyster reef habitat has declined dramatically along the eastern U.S. coast over the past century due to habitat degradation, overharvesting, reduced water quality and disease. In Florida, additional impacts have been documented in shallow-water areas used for boating activities.

University of Central Florida Associate Professor Dr. Linda Walters and her students plan to restore 60 to 80 reefs across approximately 40 acres with the help of more than 300 volunteers. The restored reefs will increase the numbers of oysters and other species that use oyster reefs for shelter.

Oyster reefs stabilize creek banks, preserve emergent shoreline vegetation and are feeding ground for wood storks, brown pelicans and numerous wading birds. Species that frequently use oyster reefs at some part of their life cycles include commercially important species such as blue crabs, stone crabs, shrimp, red and black drum and spotted sea trout.

"The Conservancy's Shellfish Restoration Network works in a number of sites around the country to protect declining species. This Indian River Lagoon oyster project will contribute to the Conservancy's expanding knowledge base with this new restoration method," said Anne Birch, the Conservancy's Indian River Lagoon Program director. The project is funded by the Conservancy's Global Marine Initiative and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Restoration Center's Community-Based Habitat Restoration Grant Program, with partner support from University of Central Florida, Canaveral National Seashore and the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program.

The Nature Conservancy lists the Indian River Lagoon as one of 10 Large-scale Conservation Areas in Florida. The lagoon is the most diverse and productive estuary in North America and is classified as an Estuary of National Significance and an Outstanding Florida Water.

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The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. The Conservancy has helped protect more than 1.1 million acres in Florida since 1961. Visit us on the Web at [nature.org/florida](http://nature.org/florida).

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